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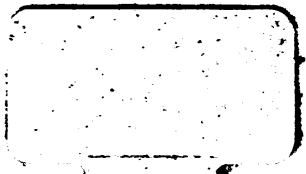
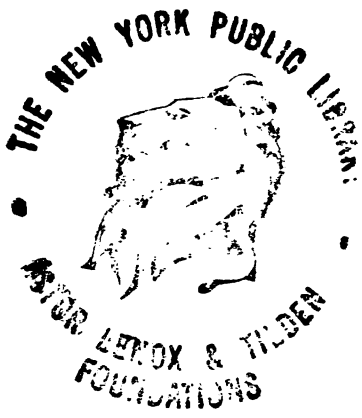
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Fairbanks, Douglas

Profiting by experience

PROFITING
BY EXPERIENCE

DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS



SCALE

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PROFITING BY EXPERIENCE





PROFITING BY EXPERIENCE

By
DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS

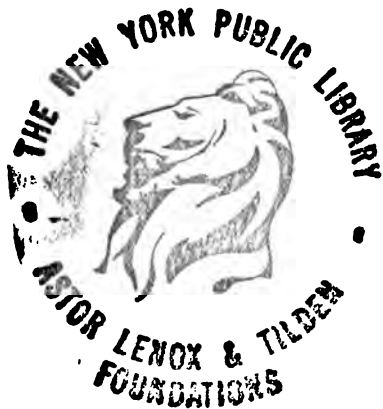
*Author of "Laugh and Live,"
"Making Life Worth
While."*



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PROFITING BY EXPERIENCE

Experience comes by contact. There is no way we can have experiences without passing directly through them. If we are up and doing they come thick and fast into our lives, some of them weighted down by the peculiar twists and turns of circumstances, others simple, easily understood, and still others complicated to the point of not being understood at all.

People are divided into two classes—*those who profit by experience and those who do not.* The unfortunate part of it all is that the latter class is by far the larger of the two.

The man of vigorous purpose, fine constitution, and the full knowledge of self, sees through an experience as clearly as through

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a window. The glass may be foggy, but he knows what lies beyond. Self-reliant and strong he seeks knowledge through experience, while the weak man, the unhealthy-minded, the inefficient, stands aside and gives him the right of way. In later years, however, they bitterly complain that they were not given the same chance to succeed.

The man of experience having long since passed through the stages of indecision has, through careful self-analysis, learned to bridge difficulties that would make others tremble with fear. He knows that every lane has a turning. He may not see it at the moment. He may not know where it is. *But that doesn't worry him.* He picks up his bundle and trudges ahead, confident that victory awaits him somewhere along the line.

The fact that he believes in himself, sets him apart from ordinary mankind. Many great men have been at loss to understand why they attained success. It is well nigh impossible for them to outline the causes that led them to the top rungs of the ladder. The reason is that *their lack of fear* of ex-

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periences was an unconscious one, rather than a conscious one. However, they are willing to admit that acting on the principle of profiting by experience *loaned them initiative* with which to proceed. They soon came to know opportunity at sight and had only to look around to find it.

The young man standing on the threshold of life is, from lack of experience, puzzled over the future. He looks above him and sees the towering successes. He reads in the papers of the massive characters who have risen from the bottom to the top. Naturally he would like to meet one of these giants of success and hear what he has to say. The interview is quite needless. "*Get busy and profit by experience*" is about all the advice one man can give to another. There is no way to profit by experience until we have had experience so there is nothing to do but get busy and experience will come as fast as we can absorb it. Our duty is to strive for success and not expect to attain it except by successive steps. A wholesale consignment would be our undoing. Quick

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successes through luck or good fortune have not the lasting value of those won by virtue of knowing how—of accomplishing what we started out to do.

Faith in one's self does not come from the outside—it must spring up naturally *from within*. A healthy body and a sane mind are the best foundations for this. The young man who begins his career with these facts in mind is given a running start over his competitors. Poverty and failure are the result of *an ignorance of the value of experience*. Worry, anxiety, fear of not doing the right thing, lack of insight into character . . . these, too, are the result of a lack of experience.

Good health is necessary to experience, but a majority neglect to take care of it. If we are to profit by what we learn we *must have the vim* with which to push forward. We must have every ounce of vitality we possess at command—ready for use. This we conserve for the *big emergency* which we know is coming. New experiences are pushing us forward and previous experiences

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are helping to move the load. Experience tells us what to do at this point and that—and at last puts its shoulder to the wheel and “*over she goes!*”

Every mind is in possession of an enormous amount of dormant power and only experience can release it into proper action. We often hear a fond mother say that her son is full to bursting with the *old Nick*, which means that the youngster is overflowing with *pent-up energy*. With experience he could find good use for it—but without it this surplus may turn out to be a dangerous possession. Young men of this type should be guarded most carefully and advised to “get busy” *early in life* at something worth while. Many a bright fellow brimming with excess power has gone as a lamb to the slaughter into the maelstrom of vice because of being held back from *legitimate occupation*. He just had to blow off steam so he did it in a gin mill rather than a rolling mill.

This dynamo, called the mind, can be trained to do anything. Not only can it be guided at the start but it can be guided by

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all that follows. It can be used for building additional dynamos to be called into action in times of need. This statement may seem at first far-fetched. If we think so it is proof that we have not *profited by our experiences* and should get down to "stock taking" before it is too late.

The practical man, after all, is only *one who takes advantage of opportunities*. He could double and triple his power if he only realized how superficial the average setback really is. The young man has just as much chance of being considered practical as the so-called older one, always provided that he has a store of experiences to profit by. The first *big experience* of life usually makes or breaks us. For this experience we need to be prepared. We must have a *strong heart* that we may bear defeat nobly for this is not to be our last kick—our last breath—*not by a jugful!*

We are going to start all over again after our setback and we are not going to wait any longer than it takes to bury the dead. This will be done decently and in good order

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—our training will admit of no indecorum. If the smash was a bad one we will assume the liability, nevertheless, and get back on the job. We are out to win and *eventually we will win.*

And that is what we mean by taking profit from experience. *The powers that break down are also the powers that build up.* The electrician who handles the motor could just as well end his own existence by that mysterious current as he could make use of it for the good of humanity. He spends years of conscientious study and masters the knowledge of it so that its uses are as simple as his A B C's. There is no doubt in the world but that he had to learn by experience. He had to go into the shop and *climb up from the bottom.* There was no other way by which he could come to know how to turn a deadly force into a well-trained necessity.

Yet the average man goes into life with as little knowledge of its forces as the baby who puts its foot upon the third rail. That fact keeps the thoughtless man down until experience comes to the rescue. When it does

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come, *if he has the sand, the common sense, the will to do*, there is naught to hold him from his goal.

There is an old saying to the effect that "Opportunity knocks but once at our door"—and that is all *fol de rol*. Opportunity knocks at some people's doors nearly every day of their lives and is given a royal welcome. That's what Opportunity likes—*appreciation*. It goes often to the home where the latchstring hangs on the outside. It's like a sign reading "Hot coffee at all hours, day or night"—very inviting. Very much different, however, from the abode whose windows shed no light and whose door is *barred from within*.

"Nobody Home!" that's the sign for this door.

Mister Numskull lives here and most of the time *he sleeps*. When anyone knocks on his door he pulls the covers up over his head to shut out the noise. He's down on his luck anyhow, therefore it would be a waste of good shoe leather for him to be up and put-

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tering around. If Opportunity ever knocked at his door he could say in all truth that *he never heard it*. He had often heard of Opportunity being in the neighborhood, but one thing is certain—*someone else had invariably seen him first*. He felt sure he would know Opportunity if ever he met him face to face, and if ever he did he would have it out with him then and there.

Meanwhile—dadgast the luck!—always the Fates pursued him with some sort of hoodoo. And his neighbors—well, some of them had sense enough to keep their distance and let him alone. Others, however, had not been considerate of the fact that a “Jinx” was on his trail, and were given to making sarcastic remarks concerning him. And thus it was that Mister Numskull spent his days, dodging his neighbors, side-stepping the highways and obscuring himself from the very individual he wanted so much to behold—*Opportunity*. At last there came a time when, in despair, *and in disrepute*, he took to the woods and is yet to be heard from. Opportunity still visits

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the neighborhood, but the path leading to Mister Numskull's home is grown up in weeds.

The fact is that our real opportunity *knocks from within*. Through experience, built upon consecutively by continuous effort, our vision expands and pounds its way out through the portals of our brain. We see the thing that we ought to do and *we go to it!* To the man who didn't see it *the opportunity did not exist*.

"What we don't know doesn't hurt us any"—so runs the old saw. And here's a case where we who didn't see, *were* hurt, but we didn't know it.

For those of us who have vision there are all sorts of opportunities, but many of them are not good for us. The ones we make for ourselves are the healthy ones, and generally they are the best for us. "Our own baby" is the one we will take the greatest pride in and enjoy the most. Then we become masters of our own destiny in a sense and can be more independent through having no senior partners in the enterprise.

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Often our dreams bring forth a need for many kinds of special knowledge and for these we go into the open market offering opportunity to many others in return for their assistance. Thus we find that everything we do is in relation to other things and dependent in part on other people.

This should make us careful and a wee bit wary. Opportunities are widely divergent in nature—through a stroke of hard luck one might have difficulty in finding employment. The first opportunity might lead to a job in a bar-room, but having fortified ourselves by developing our highest attributes such as honesty, integrity, cleanliness of body and mind—we are able to somehow or other pinch along until something better shows itself. First-class principles are not to be thrown away upon the first provocation, therefore, in order to take away the temptation, we might as well figure out that a great many employments in the world do not represent *real opportunities*, and therefore should not be considered.

Failure to seize such so-called opportuni-

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ties becomes a virtue in the same sense that the failure to seize a decent opportunity becomes a shame.

Often opportunity comes through meeting men of affairs who have power and wealth at their command. These are usually in connection with enterprises of the greater magnitude. Those of us who have the power to control our destinies to a reasonable degree should not stand back in our support of these. If we have carefully built up our initiative, self-reliance, preparedness in the way of efficiency, good health and the will to do, there is no reason why we should not aspire to take a hand in anything in which we are confident we can succeed. Among the men who control the big affairs of the business world we find a true democracy—*they want the man*. The fact that he appears before them neatly attired, bright of eye and ready of wit will surely count in his favor.

In other words, we should live up to the opportunity in whatever form it presents itself after we have accepted its responsibili-

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ties. To make this perfectly plain *we must live up to the job!* If we are to be superintendent of a coal mine "underneath the ground" we will put on our overalls and jumpers, but if we are to be manager of a grand opera house we will appear in our dress suits. The thought is obvious, but as we journey along we find many of our fellow mortals neglecting to live in line with what they are doing.

We mention this fact hopeful that we will not fail to seize our opportunities by setting up obstacles whereby we may become *persona non grata* through lack of discernment.

Opportunity is within ourselves and when we have seized our rightful share, then we may look with pride upon our endeavor and proceed to *laugh and live!*

If we interview many of life's failures we will find that the overwhelming majority went down because of their neglect to get out of an environment that was not stimulating and because their ambitions had grown rusty and inefficient to cope with depressing circumstances. The prisons and other insti-

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tutions are filled with people who did not make any attempt to get away from the vicious surroundings in which they lived. They were like tadpoles that had never grown to frogs . . . they just kept swimming around in their muddy puddles and, not having grown legs with which they could leap out onto the banks and away to other climes, they continued to swim in monotonous circles until they died. In other words, the failure is a man who dwells in muddy atmosphere all his days, who is content to remain a tadpole and who never attempts to take advantage of any opportunity. He becomes unclean, so to speak. And that is what we mean by "*cleanliness of body and mind.*" It is not intended to point out the proper way to keep our faces and hands clean, or as a sermon, but rather to show ourselves that *the clean body begets the clean mind*, the two together constituting compelling tendencies toward *the clean spirit*. A move in the direction of these takes us out of the rut of life.

No matter what cause we dig up with

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which to explain our success in life we cannot neglect this most important one—the *careful selection of our acquaintances*. And this doesn't mean that one must be a snob. Far from it. It only means that the successful man, the man who wishes to rise in life, should not spend his days in the company of *illiterate companions* who do not possess *ambition of heart or the will to do the work of the world*. It means that life is too short to hang around the loafing places with the driftwood of humanity listening to their stories of failure and drinking in with liquor some of their bitterness against those who have toiled and won the fruits of their toil. It means that we will not go out of our way to seek the friendship of men and women who are simply endeavoring to gain happiness in life without paying for it. It means that we will do all in our power to win friends who *aspire nobly* and by so doing to inspire those with whom they come in contact. Such men are naturally clean of mind and body.

We must remember always to live in a

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world of clear thought that will *stimulate our ambitions*. Dwelling in the dark corners of life and traveling with the débris of humanity will not arouse us to action and give us that swinging vigor of heart and mind so necessary to the accomplishment of great things. While we will ever lend the helping hand to those who need it we will naturally associate with those who have vim and courage. We will not be *dragged down by our associates*. Until we meet the right kind we will hold aloof, and we will not be morose and gloomy because it happens that at this moment our acquaintanceship does not include these successes. When we have succeeded in doing something big they will come to us and *if we think big things we are likely to do them*. It is a matter of the will to do.

“Nothing succeeds like success,” said some very wise man and if there ever was a phrase that rang with truth this does. It means that the *thought of success*, the courage that *comes with success*, leads to *more and more success*. It means that the thinker of these thoughts is living in a clean, whole-

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some atmosphere along with those who are determined and in earnest. It means that they have caught the fervor of true life . . . a healthy, contagious fervor which permeates the blood swiftly once it gets a hold, and like electricity it vivifies and stirs the spirit with renewed energy *day after day, year after year*. Once it wins us it will stick with us. The success of those about us will shake our lethargic limbs and stimulate us to a desire to do as they do. We will be in a world of clean thought and action and our lives will mirror their lives, our thoughts will be filled with wholesome things and with good health. We will win in spite of all obstacles.

Cleanliness is *the morale of the body and the mind*. The man who is careful of his linen and who does not neglect his morning plunge is not apt to be gloomy and morose. We notice him in the car or on the street in the morning. He comes striding along, fresh and full of *the zest of living*. His mind is clear and unclouded. His eyes are full of that vigorous light of conscientious

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desire to win and do so honestly. He has none of the hypocritical elements in his nature strong enough to rule him. There may be and probably are many weaknesses in his character. His very strength consists in his ability to *crush them and make them his slaves.*

The man who has taken his morning plunge and dressed himself agreeable to comfort and grace, has his battles of the day won in advance. He knows the value of keeping himself in trim. He does it for the sake of *his own* feelings. Our approval of his appearance goes without saying. If a man thinks well of himself in matters of appearance his general deportment is likely to coincide. Such men never overdo. They are at ease with themselves and thus impart ease to others who come in contact with them. They have, in other words, a distinction of their own and *their distinction is their power.* They know that the highest moral law of nature is that of cleanliness, that filthiness should not be allowed to dominate any man's ethics or physical condition.

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They rule such things out of their lives.

A vast magnetic force comes out of those friends of ours who are *doing things* and making the world *sit up and take notice*. The mere fact that we live near to them, know them and associate with them is proof-positive that we, too, shall go through life with clean minds and bodies. They would not tolerate us if we were to slip into shoddy ways. Nothing is revealed quicker to our intimates than *the losing of ambition . . .* the slipping into careless habits. We cannot conceal it from them. We fool only those who brush by. The loss of this self-respect has a terrible effect upon the system and every tendency toward success is thereby stunted and weakened. *We have fallen into unclean ways!* It will not be long before we sink to the bottom or else remain among the vast crowd who have neither the courage to fall nor the courage to rise.

Nothing produces failure quicker than filthiness of mind and body. Those who are successful keep away from the very thought of such a condition. They live as much as

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possible *in the open*. They take morning and evening exercises. They read good books, attend good plays, and are continually in touch with the finer developments of thought and art in the world. Their faces are open and full of sunlight. They are determined that life will not beat them in a game that only requires sureness of aim and the ability to take advantage of the thousand and one opportunities that surround them on every side.

Cleanliness stands *paramount* in its importance to *success*. Perhaps no other one thing has so vital a hold upon the individual who succeeds. The general of an army first looks to the *morale* of his troops. He knows that with clean minds and bodies his soldiers are capable of doing big things. The battleship, that efficient and highly-developed instrument of war, is so immaculate that one could eat his meals on its very decks. Its officers are wholesome, athletic fellows; its crew consists of hardy men who live sanely and vigorously and who have plenty to occupy their minds. And if cleanliness is fun-

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damental in their case why not in our own?

When we come to analyze ourselves we find that we are like a great institution of some kind. Here is the brain, the heart, the lungs, the stomach, the nerves and the muscles. Each department acts separately and yet is connected absolutely with all the others. The entire system is under one supreme department . . . *the mind*. Now if this ruling department is kept clean and full of kindly, beautiful thoughts does it not seem natural that the rest will follow its lead being so completely in its power? We realize this and the mere realization is something done towards the accomplishment of an ideal life in a world of cleanliness and beauty.

System is one of the finest tools in existence with which to build one's life into something worth while. The *body* must be run on a system as well as the *mind*. The stomach must not be overloaded with unnecessary food. The lungs must not be filled with impure air. The nerves must not be worn threadbare in riotous and ridiculous living.

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The muscles must be kept in trim with consistent exercise of the proper sort. We must recognize the wants, the needs of the physical system and see that they are supplied.

Roosevelt, perhaps more than any other living man today, has given vitality to the supreme necessity of *cleanliness of mind and body*. He has, by reason of his great prominence, been able to emphasize these two vital essentials. He called a spade a spade and his message went far. From those who knew the value of his words came nods of approval—*others took heed*. From boyhood he has systematized his life, taking the exercise needed, filling his mind with the learning of the world, winning when others would have failed, profiting by experience allotted to him through fate's kindly offices and association with the *healthy, true men*. What has been the result? He has risen to the very pinnacle of human endeavor . . . *no honors await him*. He has lived consistently and cleanly and he can look any man in the eye and say honestly: "*I have lived as I have believed.*"

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It is not necessary to become President in order to live sanely, to gain from circumstances the fruits that are ours for the asking and which have fallen into Roosevelt's hands with such profusion. We cannot all become Presidents but we can all *emulate a shining example of mental and bodily morale.*

Just as we plunge into the cold water in the early morning so should we regularly during the day plunge into the society of those whose splendid enthusiasm is helping to make the world a better place to live in. They are the kind who go into the struggle with heads high and with clean hearts. Their eyes see beyond the daily toil of life. They are in touch with the big things and it is up to us to keep step with them. They want us and they will give us the "glad hand." All they want to know is whether our courage is equal to our ambitions and whether our *house of life is kept in good order.* And so we journey along together in all good nature, not forgetting to laugh as we live.

